



**My State of Louisiana is experiencing the worst environmental disaster in our nation's history....and we have not even begun to realize the extent of the damage to our wildlife....fisheries....and coastal marshes.**

**Nor are we fully seeing the impact this will have long - term on local governments and our state's economy.**

**1) Land loss -- Louisiana loses a football field of land every 50 minutes.... We have already lost land equivalent to the size of the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area -- more land than smaller states like Delaware...Rhode Island....already gone.**

**2) We have a dead zone the size of New Jersey off our coast...a result of the high-nutrient run-off from the large Mississippi**

**River drainage basin, which includes the Midwest...and the heart of the nation's agricultural industry, with its need for fertilizers.**

**3) Thousands of dams and river structures throughout the Mississippi River system have trapped sediment and nutrients that would normally flow into the wetlands, keeping them healthy.**

**4) The deterioration of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway -- which connects the largest port system in the world. Because of land loss which has resulted in open water conditions, commerce on the Mississippi River is threatened.**

**5) Loss of barrier islands and habitat that threatens North American's largest flyways for Migratory birds.**

**6) Conflicting federal policies make restoration a minimum 20-30-year process to gain federal action.**

**7) And now....30% of the nation's seafood that was already vulnerable...has been shut down.**

**8) The BP spill threatens future energy production that will impact all consumers in the United States. Including Outer-Continental Shelf production, Louisiana ranks 1st in crude oil and 2nd in natural gas production -- fueling the nation.**

**9) Communities in storm zones are finding it impossible to keep up with skyrocketing insurance rates - small business profits are being consumed by inflexible rate plans and families with mortgages cannot stay afloat.**

**10) And finally....federal laws that arbitrarily set flood maps based on storm events, for example, may drive the cost of compliance to impossible levels for lower and middle income citizens. This dismantling of communities can be an unforeseen American tragedy destroying the cultural fabric, ways of life and economic base and placing a financial burden from which many cannot recover.**

**The explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig on April 20<sup>th</sup> claimed the lives of eleven crewmen....two native sons of my city of Baton Rouge. First, let me say.... they will never be forgotten.**

**Today, we again find ourselves in the fight of our lives.**

**Just five years after Hurricane Katrina devastated our coastal communities and the City of New Orleans.... we're fighting to save abundant natural resources.... jobs for our people....our state's economy.....and a way of life that has made Louisiana a national treasure.**

**Oil from the Deepwater Horizon blow-out now stains 45 miles of our coastline.**

**More than 1,100 members of the Louisiana National Guard work every day to try to protect our shores...yet oil continues to leak into the Gulf of Mexico....oil that will eventually end up in Louisiana's coastal marshes....in the nesting grounds of America's richest seafood supply....in our nation's rookeries....and even on the wings of our state bird as it struggles to survive.**

**We are the one voice that can say: Let's come together for the common good and go about creating a proactive agenda.**

**No one is there...on the ground in a disaster except you....so it provides a unique opportunity for you to bring your citizens and elected officials together....to build cooperation.**

**This is where we...as Mayors...have a choice to make. We can step up and step out....or we can wait to be called.**

**I believe getting out in front of a disaster is the best path to take....and the quickest route to recovery.**

**I believe it's what builds trust among your citizens when tragedy hits close to home.**

**And I believe that by getting out in front....Mayors can begin to sort through the trade-offs that have to be managed when disaster strikes.**

**In our case, that means understanding that while a moratorium may be needed to assure drilling in the Gulf is done safely....the loss of revenue and jobs is devastating to our state.**

**It means being a visionary who knows the difference between what our cities can be...and should be.... versus what they are....and stays focused on that dream.**

**And it means managing the difference between what the news media has determined to be the story....and what the news of the day truly is.**

**Louisiana is ground zero for the two worst disasters in our nation's history...both in less than five years.**

**How does a state survive this?**

**How do cities plan for their futures when their economies are impacted by unforeseen tragedies?**

**These are the questions Mayors across the Gulf Coast region have to answer.....**

**For those of you who think you are not directly affected by the Gulf oil spill....consider the contributions these coastal states make to our nation.**

**The Gulf Coast Region contributes three trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy....it's a vital economic engine for the country.**

**It contributes more than 44 percent of the crude oil...and 50 percent of the natural gas that fuels the nation.**

**It yields 70 percent of the shrimp and oysters caught in the U.S. ....**

**Most of the country's waterfowl spend their winters on the Gulf Coast....**

**And seven of the nation's top ten ports are in the Gulf of Mexico...with two in the top global seven.**

**What is happening in the Gulf of Mexico today.... affects each one of you sitting in this room.**

**Whether you see it as an economic threat....or an opportunity to plan for what could happen in your own cities....I believe we need to step forward as the Mayors of America....and lead.**

**Together, we are asking President Obama to immediately initiate emergency assessments by key federal departments and agencies...to bring policies and action that will help us rebuild ecosystems and economies.**

**We're asking the President to establish a special task force of senior federal officials...Mayors...and other local officials in the impacted area.....to provide timely and updated information on mitigation efforts....and develop strategies to accelerate the environmental and economic recovery.**

**We're further asking the President to initiate relief measures...including an Infrastructure Bank to aid the rapid revival of local and regional economies.... and specialized worker retraining programs to help put our people back to work.**

**We're calling on Congress to ensure that lead federal agencies coordinate closely with cities in all phases of this national response....**

**And provide additional resources to help with cleanup efforts...economic losses...and other financial assistance to local governments....with a schedule for reimbursing state governments for expenses in these areas.**

**Fifty years ago, our state bird – the Brown Pelican – was on the endangered species list. There were no pelicans left in Louisiana because of the devastating effect of pesticides like DDT on them.**

**Then in the 1960s...they were reintroduced to Louisiana from a colony in Florida.**

**And just six months ago...they were taken off the endangered species list...once again flourishing in the coastal marshes of Louisiana.**

**Today, America's newspapers and television networks have shown you all how the Pelican dives for fish in the Gulf....and surfaces coated in oil....**

**Oil that makes it too heavy to fly...so they literally drown.**

**And because we are in the middle of nesting season, those that can fly....go back to their nests and contaminate their own eggs.**

**I tell you about the plight of the pelicans...because in many ways, they're symbolic of our state....as they have always been.**

**We have once again been dealt a serious blow....**

**For 54 days, oil has gushed into our fragile coastal landscape....and continues to spread along the Gulf coast.**

**It's my sincere hope that President Obama will grant the requests made by the U.S. Conference of Mayors...so that we can go forth together and lead our cities...and our states....to recovery.**

**This is our time to lead....**

**As America's Mayors...this is our time to bring federal and state officials together in partnership with our cities...to save our state...and the future of any one of your cities that may face a disaster of such epic proportions.**

**Like the Brown Pelican....Louisiana will fight through this latest tragedy....re-emerge....and thrive again.**

**But it shouldn't take 50 years to make that happen.**

**And it shouldn't take 50 years for your city to recover if disaster strikes.**

**So today, I ask you.....let us work together for the future of my city...your city....and the United States of America.**

**Thank you....and may God bless.**